

MINUTES

PLANNING BOARD

TOWNSHIP OF BERKELEY HEIGHTS, NEW JERSEY

Regular Meeting

June 1, 2016

The Regular Meeting of the Planning Board was called to order at 7:30 PM by Michael Einbinder in the Public Meeting Room.

Mr. Einbinder confirmed that the meeting was being held in conformance with all regulations of the SUNSHINE LAW and proper notice had been given to the Courier News; also, the Agenda had been posted in Town Hall, Board Office, and supplied to the Township Clerk at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting. The Agenda items will not necessarily be heard in the order listed and the meeting will not continue significantly past 10:30 PM.

Roll Call:

Members present were Mr. Einbinder, Mr. Woodruff, Mr. Niceforo, Mr. Hall, Mr. Beal, and Mr. Cunningham. Mr. Willard, Board Attorney was also present.

Adoption of Minutes:

May 18, 2016

A motion was made by Mr. Einbinder, seconded by Mr. Niceforo, to adopt the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 18, 2016 as presented. The voice vote was unanimous.

Referral:

Proposed Ordinance which was introduced by the Township Council at the Public Meeting on May 24, 2016, regarding the adoption of a Redevelopment Plan for the redevelopment of the Township's municipal complex pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law. The Ordinance, along with a copy of the Municipal Complex Redevelopment Plan prepared by Harbor Consultants, Inc., is submitted to the Planning Board for its review and recommendation in accordance with N.J.S.A.40:A:12A-7(e).

The Planning Board is directed to make and transmit to the Township Council, within 45 days after referral of the above referenced Ordinance, a report including an identification of any provisions in the proposed Redevelopment Plan which are inconsistent with the master plan and recommendations concerning any inconsistencies and any other matter as the Board deems appropriate.

Michael Mistretta, Harbor Associates, Township Planner, presented the redevelopment plan for the municipal complex as outlined in the May 19, 2016 report prepared by his office. Mr. Mistretta discussed the history of the Township municipal offices which were built in the 1940s and expanded over the years resulting in a facility that is difficult and expensive to maintain and not conducive to serving the needs of the community. The need for redevelopment of the municipal complex has been discussed over the years and recommended by the Master Plan in 2007. Planning on the project was started in 2012 and the municipal complex was declared an area in need of redevelopment in March 2014. A series of town meetings was held on the proposal to redevelop the site for residential use but based on feedback from the public it was determined that it was preferred to keep the municipal complex on this property. Plans were developed and presented at a meeting held in January. Some minor changes have been made and the plan was adopted by the Council and recommended to the Planning Board for review and recommendation. The responsibility of the Planning Board is to determine if this plan is consistent with the Master Plan.

Mr. Mistretta reviewed the existing conditions on the site and the architectural needs study that was the result of meetings with department heads regarding their department needs. He also reviewed the goals and objectives of the redevelopment plan, the new zoning that is being proposed, the permitted uses, conditional uses and the bulk requirements of the project. He noted that the plan is for one project and the land cannot be subdivided or sold off and there is no other use proposed on this site.

Mr. Mistretta also reviewed the building setbacks, maximum building height, maximum number of stories, maximum impervious coverage and parking requirements. The commuter parking to be provided will increase from 88 to 123 spaces. He indicated on the site plan the location of the wetlands, the transition area, proposed structures and existing buildings. The existing public works facilities will be supplemented with new structures. Mr. Mistretta reviewed the conceptual layouts of the municipal structure which will have a total of 60,000 square feet of floor area with 20,000 square feet on each floor. He noted that there will be a substantial savings on phasing since nothing will have to be moved off the site during construction and municipal operations will continue during construction. Mr. Mistretta also discussed the streetscape improvements, architectural aspects that meet the design standards, the green components of the plan, signage, environmental issues and soil testing. It is his conclusion that the plan satisfies all the requirements of the State redevelopment plan.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Mistretta stated that in his professional opinion as a Planner this is consistent with the Master Plan of Berkeley Heights and meets the goals of the 2007 Master Plan which recommended the redevelopment of the municipal complex. The plan will result in one piece of property that cannot be

subdivided and the commuter parking area will have 123 spaces. A detailed presentation was made to the senior citizens group and many good comments were received including the suggestion for a second elevator. The architect will be looking at that possibility. The proposed floor area of the library will be 2,000 square feet greater than the existing library. Sound attenuation features will be built into the site to deal with the proximity to the train tracks.

Mr. Mistretta advised that once the plan is adopted the design phase will take approximately six months, the design would be reviewed and approved and then go out to bid followed by 18 months to two years for construction for a total of approximately three years. In his opinion there will not be any impact on the neighboring houses and the storm water management will be improved for the residents. The plan includes compliance with regulations to keep the site clean for the neighboring residents.

Open to Public

The meeting was opened to the public for comments or questions.

John Bonacci stated that he has lived in Berkeley Heights for 40 years and was previously on the Council. Mr. Bonacci stated the opinion that while the plan is very thorough he believes it does not meet the needs of the growing senior population in Berkeley Heights. He suggested that consideration be given to providing a stand-alone facility on the ground floor for the seniors which he does not think will interfere with any of the other plans.

Mr. Woodruff advised that the Planning Board is to determine if the entire project meets the Master Plan and suggested that Mr. Bonachi address this issue next week at the Council meeting.

Mr. Hall advised that a meeting was held with the seniors to get their input and the Council wants to ensure that the seniors have sufficient space and are not limited to one area of the building. The seniors are also concerned about having only one elevator and that is being looked at as well as a suggestion for a dumbwaiter to allow items to be moved from the ground floor to the lower level without using the elevators.

Mr. Woodruff stated that the usage of the building is not a Planning Board issue and suggested that these issues be brought up at the Council meeting next week.

Charles Pratt, Park Avenue, stated that he is the neighbor who is the most affected by this project. Mr. Pratt said he applauds everyone involved with the plan and the Council for the meetings, the transparency and for listening to the public.

A motion was made by Mr. Einbinder, seconded by Mr. Niceforo, to authorize the Secretary of the Planning Board to write a letter to the Township Council stating that the Board has reviewed the ordinance and proposed redevelopment plan. It is the Board's observation that it is consistent with the Master Plan and the Board has no comments regarding the ordinance.

The Motion was carried 6-0 with Mr. Einbinder, Mr. Woodruff, Mr. Niceforo, Mr. Hall, Mr. Beal, and Mr. Cunningham voting in favor. There were none opposed.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Mr. Einbinder, seconded by Mr. Niceforo, to adjourn the meeting. The voice vote was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Regina Giardina, Secretary Pro-Tem